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travellers as well those that attempt to settle as those that pas through aspicily<sup>11</sup> those that Enquire the way to fains and if the Do not support a reasonable carecter to take them Back the way the Come to the first justice for furdur Examination acording to Law and hinder if possible any more from setling here in open violation of the Law of the united States

Janeary 1799 [1800] Whareas the Indian line was run above our settlement By Captain Butler Last Summer we have some hope that the Land is purchased on which we have setled therefore we think it good to petition to Congress to annex us to some one state and as we are in the antient Limits of South Carolina we wish to be Reseated<sup>12</sup> Back to that state.

October 1802 Whareas we find that Congress hes seaded us to the State of Geaorgia therefore we think it good to petition the Generel Assembly of this State to Do to and for us as in their Wisdom think Best.

Richard Williamson

Ruben Allen

William Allen

George Welleimson?

Samuel deves Son William Son

James Williamson

James Allene

James Allen

Robert Lee

Joseph Beezley

[Addressed:] State of Geaorgia

Jeffeson County Lewesvilly<sup>13</sup>

To his Excellency the Governor John Milledge.

Mathew Patterson

Benjamin Olliver

peter Oens

John pendergrass

George Glesnar

### 3. *The First American Discoveries in the Antarctic, 1819.*

THE South Shetland islands were first discovered by Dirk Geritsz in 1598. In 1819 they were rediscovered by an Englishman, William Smith of Blyth. On February 19 and 20, while sailing from Montevideo to Valparaiso, he saw land there. On October 15 of the same year, while again sailing from Montevideo to Valparaiso, he saw the land in lat. 62° 30' S., long. 60° W., and landed a party which planted the Union jack and took possession for Great Britain.<sup>1</sup> For an independent discovery by Americans a few months later, the only authority hitherto seems to have been Edmund Fanning, who in his *Voyages around the World* (New York, 1833)<sup>2</sup> states that the *Hersilia* of Stonington, Connecticut, Captain James P. Sheffield, visited the islands in February, 1820, and began there

<sup>11</sup> Especially.

<sup>12</sup> Receded or retroceded.

<sup>13</sup> Louisville in Jefferson County was then the capital of Georgia.

<sup>1</sup> The authoritative account is in the *Edinburgh Philosophical Journal*, III. 367-380.

<sup>2</sup> P. 430.

the American seal-fisheries which proved so immensely profitable but resulted early in the extermination of the seals. The following letters, to which the managing editor's attention was directed by Professor James M. Callahan, cast further light on the American discovery.

James Byers of New York, the writer of the first letter here printed, was a ship-owner, originally of Springfield, Massachusetts.<sup>3</sup> His letter is preserved in the Department of State at Washington, Bureau of Indexes and Archives, in Miscellaneous Letters, vol. 77. General Daniel Parker, to whom it was addressed, was at the time adjutant-general and inspector-general of the United States army. The enclosed letter of Captain Fanning is not found. Other letters of Mr. Byers, near by in the same volume, show that the Stonington vessel reached the islands in December, 1819, coming from the Atlantic Ocean and South Georgia, so that knowledge of Smith's discovery is out of the question, and the American discovery rested, as Fanning states, on a reading of Dirk Gerritsz. These letters also show that Byers had promptly sent other vessels, which he hoped would arrive at these rich hunting-grounds in October, 1820.

The second letter, written by Secretary Adams to President Monroe, then at his country estate in Virginia, is found in its chronological place among the Monroe Papers at the Library of Congress. The letter of Byers which was enclosed in it is probably not the same as that here given, and seems not to be extant. The same is true of Jeremy Robinson's letter of November 15, 1819, from Valparaiso, though it is noted as having been received at the Department on August 19, 1820. Its absence is to be the more regretted, if it contained any information obtained from officers or crew of Captain William Smith's ship, which made its second arrival at Valparaiso in November.<sup>4</sup> A letter from Robinson to Dr. Samuel L. Mitchell of New York, dated Valparaiso, January 23, 1820, telling of Smith's discovery in some detail, is printed in Niles's *Register*, XIX. 43. Niles, in the heading, says of the new island or continent, "It is said, however, to have been discovered some years since by some American whalers, and the knowledge concealed for mercantile purposes". There are further references to the matter at pp. 65 and 112 of the same volume.

President Monroe's reply to Adams, dated Highland, September 1, 1820, is found among the papers of John Quincy Adams. The pertinent paragraph, printed below, is contributed through the kindness of Mr. Charles Francis Adams and Mr. Worthington C. Ford.

<sup>3</sup> Fanning, p. 419.

<sup>4</sup> *Edinburgh Philosophical Journal*, III. 373.

Its phrases would lead one to expect that the missing letter of Robinson might be found in the archives of the Navy Department. But a search kindly ordered by the chief of those archives, Mr. Charles W. Stewart, has brought to light no such letter.

I. JAMES BYERS TO GENERAL PARKER.

NEW YORK 25 Aug<sup>t</sup> 1820.

*Dear Sir,*

I have just rec<sup>d</sup> your fav<sup>r</sup> and can assure you it affords me great pleasure to learn that Gov<sup>t</sup> is disposed to give the subject of the new Discovery a serious investigation. It is quite fashionable you know, among a certain class of citizens, to accuse our Administration of lukewarmness in regard to the Mercantile interest. But not being of that number, I wrote you as I did, in great confidence that Gov<sup>t</sup> would be disposed to grant all proper protection. Since the receipt of your Letter, I have learned that the Secretary of the Navy is absent from the City on a visit to the North. I am sorry I could not see him, for I am quite confident I could satisfy him that the object is worthy the attention of Gov<sup>t</sup>.

The first information I ever received respecting the new Discovery was from a Capt Sheffield who arrived at Stonington last spring, from the new Islands. As soon as he reached this Country he wrote me a Letter informing me of his success and offering to out again in my employ. He had formerly been in my service and I knew him to be worthy of all confidence. In order to obtain correct information, I authorized Mr. Walter Nexsen, a respectable Mercht and also a partner in my Sealing enterprises, to go to Stonington and have an interview with Capt. S. Mr. Nexsen obtained the following particulars, from his Log Book.

The great New Island or Continent is in Lat. 61: 10 S., Long. 57: 15 W. Coasted about 50 Miles—saw no end South W. Returned to what he thought the S. W. end, and came to Anchor between a number of Islands, a short distance from the Mainland. He found pretty good Anchorage in 15 Fathom Water. On one of these Islands he took 9,000 fur Seal in 15 days. He had no more Salt or could [have] killed any number. He says he saw at one view 300,000 Seal. He thinks the Country is uninhabited and destitute of Wood. Water plenty and good. The Land runs about N<sup>o</sup> East and S<sup>t</sup> West. In addition to the above, I have learned from other sources of the existence of these Islands, and all nearly agree in L<sup>t</sup> and Long. Capt Fanning late of the Spartan mentions the subject in the Letter enclosed. It is considered by everyone that the fact is fully established and it would afford great satisfaction to every American if our Government was the first to survey and name the new World. I should at first have written Mr. Adams on this subject, but being unknown to him I thought it best to make the Communication through you, thinking, that your very respectable station under Government would perhaps arrest the attention of the proper Dept. with greater effect than any representation from an unknown individual.

I am with respect  
Sir your Ob<sup>t</sup>  
St  
JAMES BYERS.

P. S. The British first took possession of South Georgia Island, from which they have taken great numbers of Seal and much Sea Eliphiant Oil. They would never suffer Americans to Seal there, as they claim the Islands as belonging to Great Britain.

[Addressed:] General Parker, Washington.

II. J. Q. ADAMS TO MONROE.

WASHINGTON 26 Aug. 1820.

*Dear Sir,*

The enclosed Letter, from J. Byers of New York to General Parker was delivered to me by that officer and relates to a subject of very considerable importance. To give you a more perfect understanding of its contents I enclose with it a Letter of 15. November 1819 from Jeremy Robinson of Valparaiso. General Parker says that more than twenty Vessels have been fitted out from New York, and have sailed or are about to sail upon Sealing and Whaling Voyages to this newly discovered Island or Continent. Byers says they will be on the spot before the English, but whether they can reach Latitude 61. 40. South in October which answers to our April is to be seen. I much doubt it.

If they do, and the English adventurers come there afterwards, we shall hear more of it. Nootka Sound, Falkland Island questions may be expected. I beg leave to recommend the affair to your particular consideration. The British Government just now have their hands so full of Coronations and Adulteries, Liturgy, prayers and Italian Sopranos, Bergamis and Pergamis, High Treasons and Petty Treasons, Pains, Penalties and Paupers,<sup>5</sup> that they will seize the first opportunity they can to shake them all off, and if they can make a question of national honour about a foot-hold in Latitude 61. 40. upon something between Rock and Ice-berg, as this discovery must be, and especially a question with us, they will not let it escape them.

I desired General Parker to advise Mr. Byers to see the Secretary of the Navy, and confer with him about this project of a settlement and sending a Frigate *to take possession*. I hope this plan will meet your approbation. There can be no doubt of the right, and the Settlement is a very good expedient for protecting the real objects, to catch Seals and Whales. The idea too of having a grave controversy with Lord Castlereagh, about an Island Latitude 61. 40. South, is quite fascinating.

I send also another Letter from Jeremy Robinson of 17. January 1820, very long and interesting. This man has given us so much valuable information, and sees things with so much more impartiality, and therefore accuracy, than some others who have been there, that I almost wish you would forget his indiscretion by which he forfeited the commission he had obtained, and restore him to some subordinate agency. I shall have a translation made of the Long Letter from the Director O'Higgins to you which was forwarded through Robinson, and to which I suppose the Director will expect an answer, verbal or written.

With perfect Respect, I remain, Dear Sir,

faithfully yours  
JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

<sup>5</sup> Allusions to the trial of Queen Caroline, etc.

## III. PRESIDENT MONROE TO SECRETARY ADAMS (EXTRACT).

September 1, 1820.

The discovery of land in the Pacific, of great extent, is an important event, and there are strong reasons in favor of your suggestion to aim at the occupancy on our part. Communicate the documents to the Secretary of the Navy, and suggest the motive, asking how far it would be practicable to send a frigate there, and thence to strengthen our force along the American coast. I shall also write him on the subject. . . .